USING THE HUNGER SCALE
FOR MINDFUL EATING

Do you ever get so hungry that you no longer feel hungry? Or feel so full that all you want to do is lie down and take a nap? These are the extremes at either end of the Hunger Scale, and they signal a need for caution.

The Hunger Scale is an imaginary scale that can help pinpoint your level of hunger and assess your need for food. People who eat healthfully not only know when to eat, they also know when to stop. Whether they know it or not, they are in tune to their body’s signals and are using the Hunger Scale.

The trick to using the Hunger Scale is to pay careful attention to your body and what it is telling you. If you are losing concentration and starting to feel irritable during the day, it's probable that you are already past the time when you should have eaten. Once you start to feel shaky, or develop a headache, there's a very good chance that you will overeat in an attempt to feel better.

How to Use the Hunger Scale

The hunger scale will help you avoid eating mindlessly; keeping your body in tune with when to snack or eat a meal. The more in touch you are with your hunger, the less you need to count calories. Keep in mind, snacking on healthful foods throughout the day will ward off hunger, balancing extreme feelings of hunger throughout the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HUNGRY</th>
<th>NOT HUNGRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>Starving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3</td>
<td>(Grumbling stomach, Irritable, Uncomfortable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>Perfectly comfortable. You feel satisfied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 9</td>
<td>Comfortable. You're more or less satisfied but could eat a little more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Stuffed (Very Uncomfortable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, decide how you're feeling:

10: Stuffed. You feel Thanksgiving full.
9: Very uncomfortably full. You need to loosen your clothes.
8: Uncomfortably full. You feel bloated.
7: Full. A little bit uncomfortable.
6: Perfectly comfortable. You feel satisfied.
5: Comfortable. You're more or less satisfied but could eat a little more.
4: Slightly uncomfortable. You're just beginning to feel signs of hunger. Time to snack or eat a meal.
3: Uncomfortably hungry. Your stomach is rumbling. Time to snack or eat a meal.
2: Very uncomfortable. You feel irritable and unable to concentrate. Time to snack or eat a meal!
1: Weak and light-headed. Your stomach acid is churning. Time to snack or eat a meal!

You should eat a meal or a snack only when you're feeling 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Meal or Snack? If it's going to be at least 30 minutes until a meal, have a snack to curb hunger. Put your fork down at a 5 or 6 and wait until the next scheduled meal or snack.

If you're trying to lose weight, stop at a 5, the point at which you're eating a little less than your body is burning.
Sensible Snacking

Never underestimate the power of snacks. When carefully chosen, they help keep your metabolism revved, your blood sugar steady and your energy at its peak.

- Plan to eat three moderate-sized meals a day, plus two to three healthy snacks.
- If your next meal is going to be more than five hours away, plan for a nutritious snack in between meals to hold you over.
- Think of snacks as another opportunity to get the nutrients you might not otherwise get from your regular meals.
- Balance your snacks by combining carbs, protein and small amounts of “good” fats.
- Think of a snack as a mini meal so it could be anything you would eat at mealtimes, just a smaller portion size.
- The best snack choices are minimally processed, top out at 200 calories, are low in saturated fat (1 gram or less per serving), low in sodium (140 milligrams or less a serving), low in added sugar (less than 8 grams a serving, excluding natural sugars) and contain at least 2.5 grams of fiber.

Combo Snack Ideas

These snacks provide both carbohydrates and protein for longer-lasting energy.

- Whole grain bread with almond butter
- Whole wheat pita and hummus
- Fruit and a handful of nuts (any nuts—just watch the portions and choose unsalted)
- Nut butter (almond, cashew, peanut) and whole wheat crackers
- Low-fat cheese and veggies
- High-fiber cereal with low-fat or skim milk
- Brown rice sushi roll
- An instant bean soup with carrot sticks
- Baked tofu on salad greens
- Instant oatmeal with sunflower seeds
- Black bean dip with low-fat tortilla chips
- High fiber toaster waffle with berries
- Sliced turkey and avocado
- Tuna fish with diced tomatoes and cucumbers
- Smoked salmon on a brown rice cake
- Microwavable bean burrito with salsa
- Individual carton of low-fat chocolate milk
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fresh fruit
- Handful of trail mix made with nuts and whole grain cereal and/or dried fruit
- Fruit and yogurt smoothie